

# Consumer Perceptions of Dissolvable Tobacco Products

Preliminary Findings from Focus Groups



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## Disclaimer

The information in these materials is not a formal dissemination of information by FDA and does not represent agency position or policy.



# Overview of Presentation

- Introduction to dissolvable tobacco products (DTPs)
- Regulation of DTPs
- FDA consumer perception research

# What are DTPs?

- Are not defined by statute
- Are described by some researchers and manufacturers as products that deliver nicotine as they dissolve or disintegrate in the mouth and do not require spitting
- For the purposes of this research and presentation, DTPs include sticks, strips, orbs, or lozenges (Camel, Marlboro, Ariva, Stonewall, Viceroy Flex)

# What do these products look like?

## Products



## Packaging



## **Camel sticks, strips, and orbs**

- Portland, OR; Columbus, OH; Indianapolis, IN
- Denver, CO; Charlotte, NC

## **Marlboro and Skoal smokeless tobacco sticks**

- Kansas

## **Ariva and Stonewall**

- Limited nationwide distribution

## **Viceroy Flex**

- Several towns in NC and VA



# FDA's Regulatory Authority

Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (FSPTCA) gave authority to FDA to regulate the manufacturing, marketing, and distribution of tobacco products

Currently, cigarettes, cigarette tobacco, smokeless tobacco, and roll-your-own tobacco are subject to regulation under FD&C Act § 901(b)

FDA intends to propose a regulation that would deem products meeting the statutory definition of “tobacco product” found at section 201(rr) of the FD&C Act to be subject to FDA's regulation under FD&C Act § 901(b)



## FDA and DTPs

Many DTPs may meet the current statutory definition of “smokeless tobacco”

“any tobacco product that consists of cut, ground, powdered, or leaf tobacco and that is intended to be placed in the oral or nasal cavity” (FD&C Act § 900(18)).”

Some dissolvable tobacco products may not meet the definitions of “cigarette,” “cigarette tobacco,” “roll-your-own tobacco,” or “smokeless tobacco” and so may not currently be subject to FDA regulation





# FDA and DTPs

## FSPTCA mandates that:

“The Secretary shall refer to the Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee [TPSAC] for report and recommendation, under section 917(c)(4), the issue of the nature and impact of the use of dissolvable tobacco products on the public health, including such use among children.” (FD&C Act § 907(f))

TPSAC reviewed available information and provided recommendations to FDA in Spring 2012

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/TobaccoProductsScientificAdvisoryCommittee/UCM295994.pdf>



# DTPs and Consumer Perceptions

Very little is known about what consumers think about these products

FDA conducted exploratory research with youth and young adults to better understand what youth and young adults think about DTPs



# Research Questions

- Are youth and young adults aware of DTPs? If so, what do they know about them?
- What do youth and young adults think about DTPs?
- What kind of reactions do DTP packaging and ads elicit?
- How do youth and young adults perceive the health risks of DTPs?
- Among those who have used DTP, what are their reactions, beliefs, and behaviors?

- Individual interviews and focus groups
- 60-90 minute semi-structured discussions led by professional moderator
- Locations:
  - Portland, OR
  - Denver, CO
  - Charlotte, NC



# Structured Discussion Outlined in Moderator's Guide

- Awareness of DTPs
- Reactions to products
- Reactions to packaging
- Reactions to ads
- Risk perception of DTPs
- DTP users only:
  - Reactions to product(s) used
  - Use patterns

# Focus Group Stimuli

## Products



## Packages



## Ads



Groups segmented by age, sex, and use of DTPs

Screeners used to recruit participants

- Current tobacco users
- Youth (15-17), young adults (18-25)
- Those who have tried DTPs



## Description of Participants

- Majority of participants had not heard of DTPs
- Most participants had not tried DTPs
- Majority of participants had some college or had completed college
- Majority of participants were White





## Participant Samples

Youth (N= 10)

Young adults (N= 85)

Young adult DTP users (N=11)

## Few participants reported awareness of DTPs

Those who were aware learned about DTPs through:

- Friends or significant others
- Product giveaways at local nightclubs, bars, and tobacco events
- Employment at a gas station/convenience store

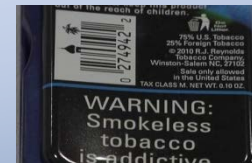


## Very few participants who tried DTPs continued to use them

- Most participants who tried DTPs only used product once or twice and discontinued use
- Reports of unappealing taste/mouth feel
- Did not replace smoking
- Semi-regular users reported using while at work (“quick fix”)

# Participants' reactions to packaging varied by product

- Camel packaging elicited positive reactions
  - “Sleek” “cool” “durable”
- Stonewall, Ariva, and Viceroy Flex elicited negative reactions
  - “Old” “boring” “medicinal”
- Appeared to be a slight preference for Marlboro/Skoal packaging among males
  - “Not flashy” “compact”
- Easily recognized brands and warning labels identified products as tobacco products



# Participants found ads to be appealing and understandable

- Some participants reported having seen ads
- Some participants assumed that ads were targeting younger audiences
- Some participants assumed ads were targeting current smokers
- Participants reported taglines conveyed advantages of products
  - Ability to use where smoking was not allowed
  - Inconspicuous/discreet



# Participants perceived incongruence between packaging/ads and product

- Participants perceived packaging and ads to be novel and appealing...
  - But found products to be bland and unattractive
- Participants reported packaging looked like familiar objects (e.g., cell phone, candy)...
  - But product was not what was expected

## Products



## Ads/Packaging



## Participants saw DTPs as harmful to health

- The majority of participants reported there would be risks associated with DTP use
- Some participants saw DTPs as more harmful than cigarettes, others as less harmful
- Participants talked about “trade-offs” when comparing DTPs to cigarettes and other tobacco products (e.g., “trading” oral cancer for lung cancer)



## Participants expressed little explicit interest in trying DTPs in the future

- Some participants reported interest in trying the Marlboro or Camel stick
- Some interest among athletic participants
- Few would pay to try product





## Participants reported more perceived disadvantages noted than advantages

- Inability of product to substitute for act of smoking
- Inability of product to facilitate social interactions
- Concern about product appearance
- Concern about mouth feel and taste
- Perception that the products would be expensive



## Highlights from DTP User Interview: Young adult male, Denver

- Smoker who also uses snus occasionally
- Uses DTPs to get “fix” during work and sometimes for convenience at home
- Introduced to product through Camel rep at gas station (\$1 coupon)
- Primarily uses Camel orbs, has tried strips
- Uses 4-5 orbs in a typical work day
- Believes they are a healthier alternative to cigarettes and chew, with few health risks
- Smokes fewer cigarettes per day now that he uses DTPs
- Has a friend who uses them on long truck drives for work



## In summary, this study suggests...

- Few participants were aware of DTPs
- Participants seemed to value perceived behavioral and social benefits of their current tobacco product (primarily cigarettes)
- Most participants were aware of the potential health risks associated with DTPs and other tobacco products
- More research may be needed to better understand perceptions and behaviors among those who report regular DTP use
- More research may be needed to better understand awareness, beliefs, and behaviors among other populations (e.g. adult tobacco users; non-users)



## These findings cannot be generalized to the U.S. population because...

- Data are qualitative
- Sample size is small, especially among youth and DTP users
- Availability of products and marketing is limited
  - Camel DTPs had been off the market in Portland for over a year at time of study
  - Marlboro and Skoal sticks only available in KS
  - Viceroy Flex only available in VA and NC
  - Ariva and Stonewall have limited distribution and marketing



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# QUESTIONS?

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